



News Advisory

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

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NEWS ADVISORY:

"Troop Support Mail Policy Stressed"

DATE: March 24, 2003

NUMBER: 03-03-12

YOUNGSTOWN AIR RESERVE STATION, OHIO – To bolster force protection, the general public is urged ***not*** to send unsolicited mail, care packages or donations to service members forward deployed unless you are a family member, loved one or personal friend.

On Oct. 30, 2002, the Department of Defense (DoD) suspended the "Operation Dear Abby" and "Any Servicemember" mail programs due to force protection concerns. Although these programs provide an excellent means of support to friends and loved ones stationed overseas, they also provide an avenue to introduce hazardous substances or materials into the mail system from unknown sources. Unsolicited mail, packages and donations from organizations and individuals also compete for limited airlift space used to transport supplies, war-fighting materiel and mail from family and loved ones.

Recently, DoD has become aware of organizations and individuals who continue to support some form of the "Any Servicemember" program by using the names and addresses of individual servicemembers and unit addresses. These programs are usually supported by well-intentioned, thoughtful and patriotic groups who are simply unaware of the new risks facing deployed military forces. Some individuals and groups publicize the names and addresses of service members, ships or units on Web sites, with good intentions. The result, however, is a potential danger to the troops they wish to support.

DoD cannot support creative and well-intentioned efforts that defeat force protection measures, but can instead recommend alternatives to mail and donation programs. To show support to troops overseas, the following are recommended:

* Log on to the following Web sites to show support, to include greeting cards, virtual Thank You cards and calling card donations to help troops stay in contact with loved ones:

http://www.defendamerica.mil/support_troops.html

<http://www.usocares.org/home.htm>

<http://www.army.mil/operations/iraq/faq.html>

* Visit Department of Veterans Affairs hospitals and nursing homes. Volunteer your services to honor veterans who served in past conflicts.

Mail from family members and loved ones has always been encouraged and the military mail system will continue to work hard to get that mail to servicemembers overseas.